

me for a few moments—*Christ's superintendence of the Church by the instrumentality of the ministers of the Gospel.*

I. Let us consider, *first*, in some particulars, the relation of the reigning Mediator to the whole Church.

(1.) He is the great fountain of *spiritual* light. He has given the *outward* light of revelation by prophets, by personal teaching, and by apostles. *Now*, when he has "gone to the Father," he gives *spiritual* light.

The last prophet of the Old Testament closed the ancient canon in these words: "But unto you that fear my name shall the *Sun of Righteousness* arise with healing in his wings." The last prophet of the New Testament beholds Jesus, in vision, beaming on the Church with a countenance, as when "the sun shineth in his strength." It is well to remember what the sun is to the world of nature. Absolute darkness should hold its empire over the globe, and even the moon could not bestow a borrowed light upon a benighted world. Were it possible, streams might flow, birds might sing, hills might swell out their huge sides to court the light, mountains, in wild career, might toss their fantastic tops, and send down torrents from a thousand springs into the thirly vales, breezes might fan the globe, and clouds fill their vapory cells with rain; the whole framework might be perfect: but if the sun were not to rise upon the world, and day not to follow night, all this colossal preparation would be in the midst of the spheres, cold and sepulchral, as a mighty tomb of frozen death. Let the sun shine, however, and all is life and action; man lives and goes to his daily work, inferior creatures gambol, forests expand their broad and brawny limbs, and beauty soothes the spirit, and plenty crowns the labors of man.

So, too, a human soul may be perfect in its powers: its faculties may be fit to traverse the highest paths of learning: there may tabernacle in that soul a piercing intellect and a flaming fancy, flashing its images quicker than lightning from pole to pole; and there may beat in that soul a noble heart, every pulsation sobbing, consciously or unconsciously, for refuge and for rest in God; but while that soul is untouched by the light of the Saviour's mediatorial life, by a ray from the triumphant Redeemer upon his mediatorial throne, though all the operations of mind may be performed, its results are dwarfish, its moral powers are undeveloped, its emotions are wasted, its aspirations are unsatisfied, and its career leads through the miseries of spiritual to the horrors of final doom.

So too is it with the visible Church. The framework of the visible Church is the work of that great God who created this universal frame, and its moral machinery is perfection itself. Amid many human stains and becloudings it bears the marks of a Divine hand. But it may be a dead frame, and in many cases has been a noble preparation without results. Let Christ, however, the source of light and life, breathe and blaze upon it, as on the day

of Pentecost, and the mere Christian body, the mere organism, is moved with light. Let the great living prophet of his church bend over it, touch it with the power of his incarnate reign, and breathe into the lifeless corpse of the divinely built, but divinely deserted tabernacle, and members of the church besiege heaven with prayers, hearts burst with praise, hands are open and missions flourish. The waters of comfort prevail over the earth. The light and life of Christ are the fountains of the church's existence.

(2.) Christ is to the Church as a High priest, to supply the oil of his spirit.

When oil is wanting, a lamp does not burn. When it is low, the light is feeble, and flickers. When the bowl of oil is full, then the lamp of the church's spiritual light and spiritual loveliness blazes bright and clear. It was the function of the high priest in the temple, to replenish at stated times, the oil in the bowl of the golden candlestick, that its sacred courts might never want that holy symbol of spiritual knowledge and spiritual prosperity.

It is the function of our great High priest to make his church "arise" from the "mire clay" of sin and open vice, the plague that surrounds her on every side, "and shine" with his glory and his "comeliness."

Brethren in Christ! It is not hard to tell when the oil is low in the lamp of the Church. Do men belong to the church who seek to obtain certain temporal advantages by their adhesion? Do men think and talk of the church as a political instrument merely, to be worked as a political question to the attainment of a political advantage? Do men frequent the courts of the Lord's house as a mere tribute to custom? Do men keep their religion for display in the public ordinances of the church and neglect the secret offices of the closet? Do men listen to the services of the Lord's house in a critical captious spirit? Do men in comfortable circumstances grudge every copper given to the gospel, and calculate it as a lost penny? Are the members of a church supporting no mission? Do they imagine that their duty is done and well done, when they support the gospel among themselves, and do they seem quite happy to deny themselves the rapture of extending the gospel for the obedience of the faith among all nations? Do men profess to adhere to the bible and evidently persist in taking their moral principles from the customs of the world? *Tha* and *there* the oil, the balmy influence, the spiritual breath of the great High priest, which "the heavens have received, is low in the candlestick of the church."

Let us be mindful of our circumstances. We live in a world where troubles press thick upon us. The wants of the flesh are urgent. Great civil and temporal questions are so absorbing, that attention to them takes the place of religion. Church and state are ever and anon rocking with agitation. We need that the Saviour bestow upon us much of his spirit, and of the ministration of the comforter, to mak